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To the Honorable JB Pritzker, Governor  
and Members of the General Assembly:

This report provides preliminary details on opioid overdoses in Illinois for the year 2021. Overdose data from the previous years are also provided to allow for comparisons. The Opioid Overdose Semiannual Report consolidates the overdose reporting requirements under the Hospital Licensing Act (210 ILCD 85/6.14g) and the Counties Code (55 ILCS 5/3-3013).

The report includes information on overdose deaths, including heroin and opioid analgesics. Additionally, it includes non-fatal overdose information reported by hospitals to the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) as required in the Hospital Licensing Act (210 ILCS 85/6.14g(b)). This semiannual report updates the “Opioid Overdose Semiannual Report – August 2021,” adding more recent data and trends. The 2020 data shared within this report are finalized, but the 2021 data remain preliminary as cases are reviewed.

In 2021, opioid overdose deaths among Illinois residents increased 2.3% from 2,944 deaths in 2020 to 3,013 deaths in 2021. The report includes demographic data that indicate a continuation of the previously reported racial disparities, with non-Hispanic Black or African American populations continuing to be disproportionately affected by opioids.

Continuous reporting, updates, and information may be found on the IDPH website at <http://dph.illinois.gov/opioids/home> and <https://idph.illinois.gov/OpioidDataDashboard/>.

I hope you find this report informative and useful as we continue working together to address the opioid crisis facing Illinois.

Sincerely,

Amaal V.E. Tokars  
Acting Director

# Statewide Semiannual Opioid Report

## Illinois Department of Public Health

May 2022

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### FATAL OPIOID OVERDOSES

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**2021 data are still provisional and may change as cases are reviewed.**

In 2021, there were 3,013 fatalities due to opioid overdose in Illinois. This represents a 2.3% increase from 2020 and a 35.8% increase from 2019 (Fig. 1). Monthly trends, although variable, have not shown the same peak that occurred in May 2020 (Fig. 2). Instead, the monthly totals were generally higher in 2021, with the median number of fatalities in 2020 being 241 and the median number of fatalities in 2021 was 257. The 12-month rolling average has remained steady since autumn 2020.

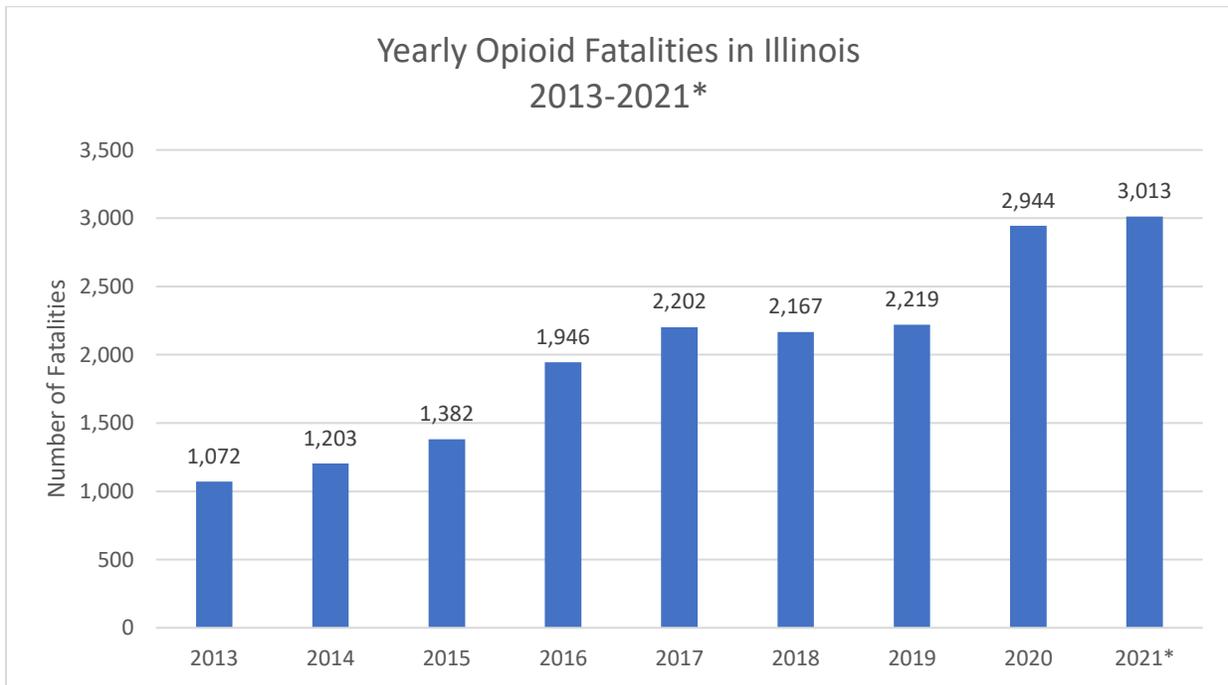


Figure 1. Yearly opioid fatalities in Illinois from 2013-2021 as reported by the Illinois Vital Records System, IDPH. \*2021 opioid fatalities are provisional and may change as cases are reviewed.

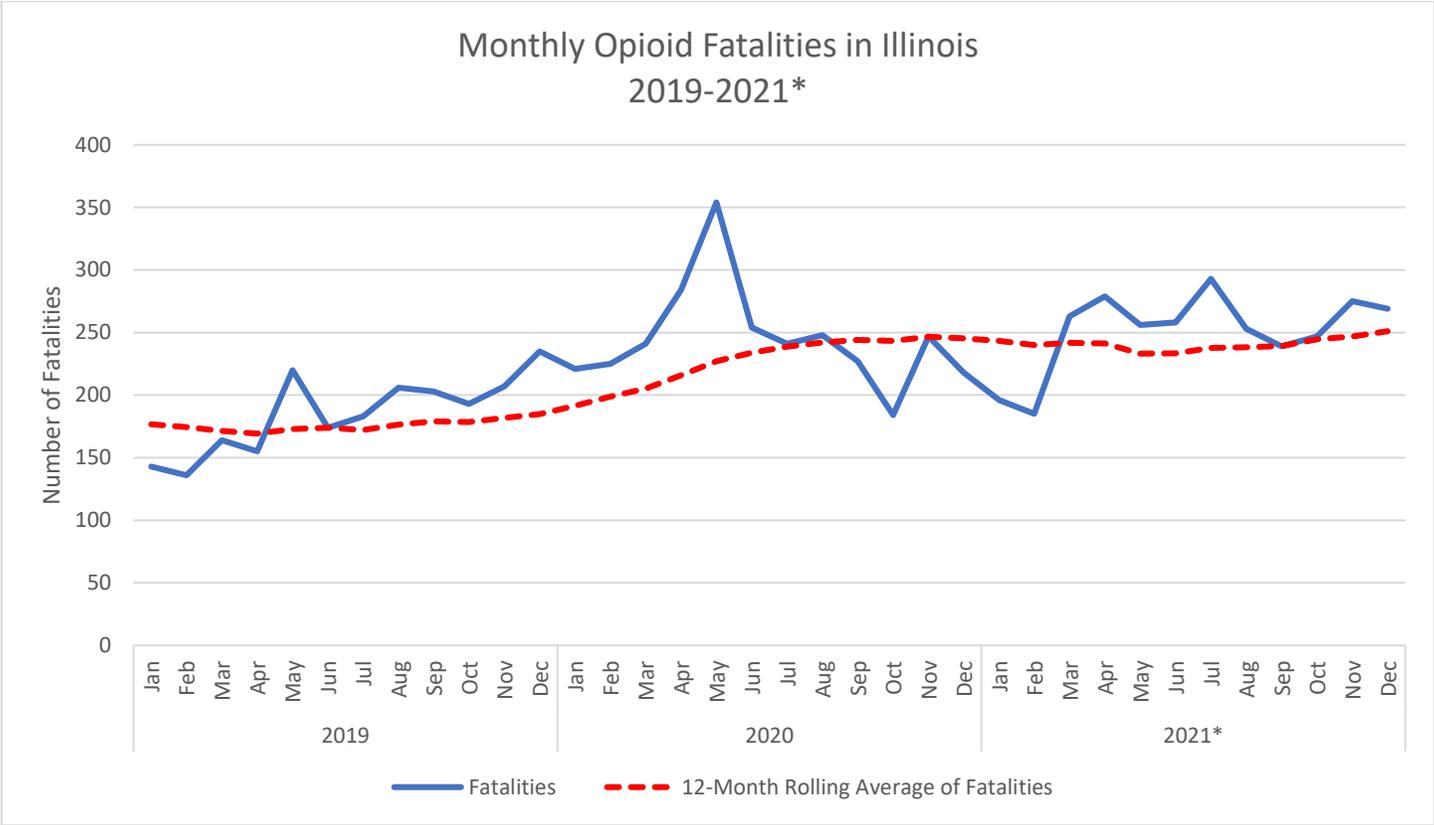


Figure 2. Monthly and 12-month rolling averages of opioid fatalities in Illinois from 2019-2021 as reported by the Illinois Vital Records System, IDPH. \*2021 opioid fatalities are provisional and may change as cases are reviewed.

Demographics of opioid fatalities are listed in Table 1. The highest number of opioid fatalities in 2021 occurred in non-Hispanic White individuals (1,468), while the highest age-adjusted fatality rate was among non-Hispanic Blacks (60.8 per 100,000). By age group, the highest number of opioid fatalities occurred in the 45-54-year age group (672), followed closely by the 35-44-year age group (666) and the 55-64-year age group (659). However, the highest age-adjusted fatality rate occurred in the 35-44-year age group (6.6 per 100,000), followed by the 45-54-year age group (5.8 per 100,000) and the 25-34-year age group (4.8 per 100,000). Finally, the highest number and rate of opioid fatalities occurred in males (2,232; 36.1 per 100,000), which accounted for 74% of the fatalities.

Table 1. Statewide opioid fatality rate by race/ethnicity, age group, and sex for 2021\* as reported by the Illinois Vital Records System, IDPH

	Total Number*	Fatality Rate (per 100,000 capita)
<b>Statewide<sup>^</sup></b>	<b>3,013</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Race/Ethnicity<sup>^</sup></b>		
Non-Hispanic White	1,468	20.5
Non-Hispanic Black	1,158	60.8
Hispanic/Latinx	361	16.6
Non-Hispanic Other	26	3.0
<b>Age Groups<sup>^</sup></b>		
< 25	228	2.1
25 - 34	613	4.8
35 - 44	666	6.6
45 - 54	672	5.8
55 - 64	659	3.5
65 +	175	1.1
<b>Sex</b>		
Female	781	12.2
Male	2,232	36.1

\*2021 opioid fatalities are provisional and may change as cases are reviewed.

<sup>^</sup>Statewide, Race/ethnicity, and age group fatality rates are age-adjusted.

The rise in the number of opioid fatalities in the past decade nationwide is attributed to the influx of synthetic opioids (fentanyl and its analogs) into the drug supply and to an increase in polysubstance use. In 2021, toxicology testing found that 2,672 (89%) of the opioid fatalities involved a synthetic opioid. Further, 1,789 (59%) of the opioid fatalities involved at least one additional substance (Table 2).

Table 2. Substance involvement in opioid-related fatalities for 2021\* as reported by the Illinois Vital Records System, IDPH

<b>Total Opioid-Involved Fatalities*</b>	<b>3,013</b>
Opioid Only	1,224
Opioid + Another Substance	1,789
<i>Cocaine</i>	660
<i>Multiple substances</i>	445
<i>Alcohol</i>	235
<i>Benzodiazepine</i>	227
<i>Psychostimulant</i>	222

\*2021 opioid fatalities are provisional and may change as cases are reviewed.

Opioid use and opioid fatalities are spread across the state. High opioid overdose rates occur in both urban, small urban, and rural counties, with 17 having a rate above the statewide opioid fatality rate of 24 deaths per 100,000 capita. Figure 3 and Table 2 depict the provisional county-level opioid overdose fatality rate per 100,000 capita.

# 2021 Provisional Illinois Opioid Fatality Rate per 100,000 Capita

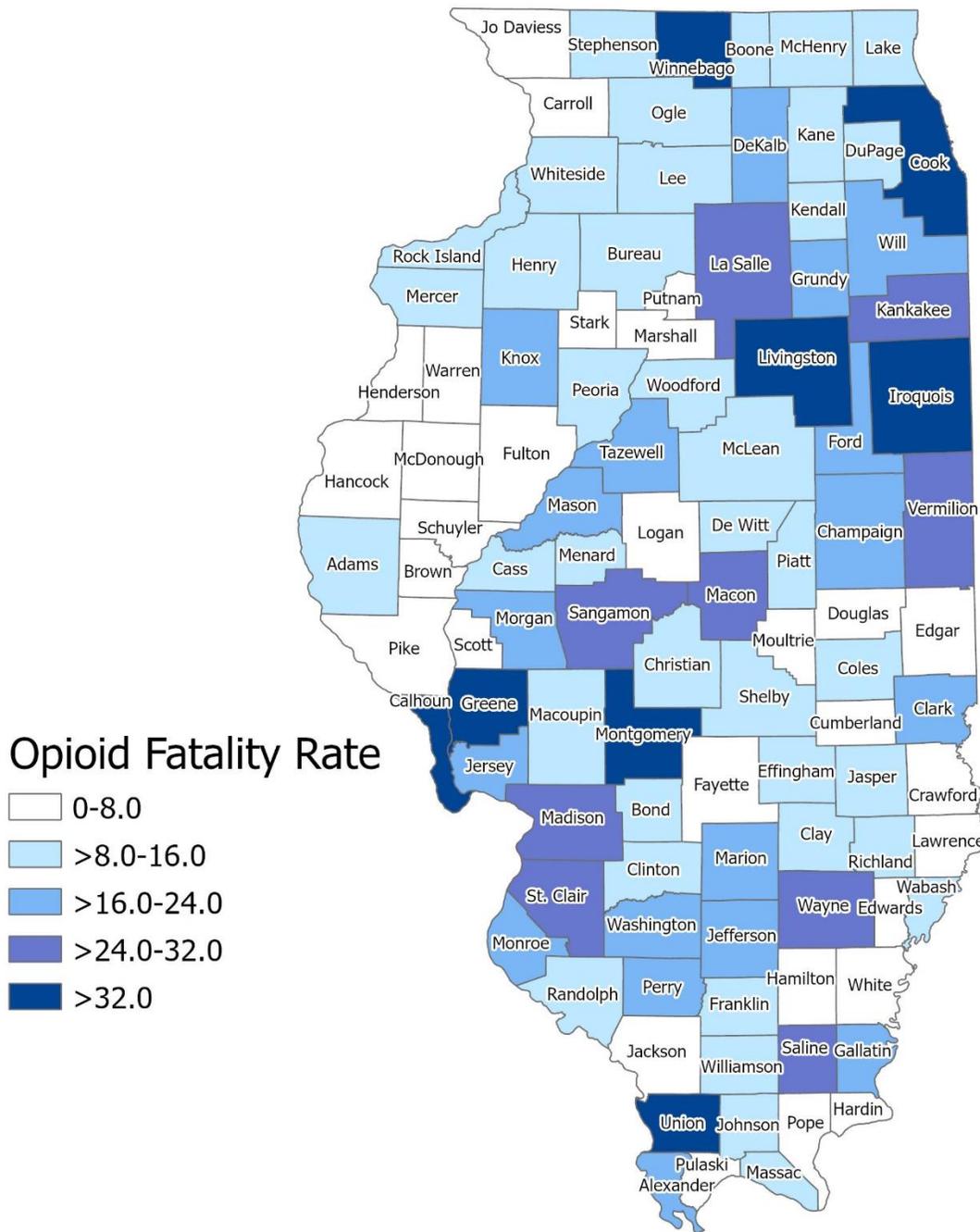


Figure 3. 2021 provisional Illinois opioid fatality rate per 100,000 capita by county as reported by the Illinois Vital Records System, IDPH. County-level fatality rates are calculated by the number of county residents who died due to opioid overdose per year divided by the population of the county and multiplied by 100,000. Counties with smaller populations could have rates higher than counties with larger populations, even though there are fewer opioid fatalities.

Table 2. 2021 Provisional number of opioid fatalities and opioid fatality rate per 100,000 capita by county

County	Number of Opioid Fatalities	Opioid Fatality Rate per 100,000 Capita
Adams	8	12.3
Alexander	1	18.2
Bond	2	12.3
Boone	6	11.4
Brown	0	0.0
Bureau	4	12.4
Calhoun	2	43.3
Carroll	0	0.0
Cass	1	8.4
Champaign	40	19.1
Christian	3	9.4
Clark	3	19.6
Clay	2	15.3
Clinton	3	8.0
Coles	5	9.9
Cook	1671	32.7
Crawford	1	5.4
Cumberland	0	0.0
De Witt	2	13.0
DeKalb	17	16.3
Douglas	0	0.0
DuPage	121	13.2
Edgar	1	5.9
Edwards	0	0.0
Effingham	5	14.7
Fayette	1	4.7
Ford	3	23.2
Franklin	6	15.8
Fulton	1	3.0
Gallatin	1	20.9
Greene	5	39.4
Grundy	11	21.6
Hamilton	0	0.0
Hancock	1	5.7
Hardin	0	0.0
Henderson	0	0.0
Henry	6	12.4
Iroquois	9	33.7

County	Number of Opioid Fatalities	Opioid Fatality Rate per 100,000 Capita
Jackson	3	5.3
Jasper	1	10.6
Jefferson	8	21.5
Jersey	4	18.5
Jo Daviess	0	0.0
Johnson	1	8.1
Kane	78	14.7
Kankakee	34	31.3
Kendall	11	8.4
Knox	8	16.3
La Salle	30	27.9
Lake	110	15.9
Lawrence	0	0.0
Lee	5	14.9
Livingston	13	36.7
Logan	1	3.5
Macon	25	24.3
Macoupin	6	13.5
Madison	77	29.3
Marion	8	21.6
Marshall	0	0.0
Mason	3	22.8
Massac	2	14.7
McDonough	2	6.8
McHenry	45	14.7
McLean	17	9.9
Menard	1	8.3
Mercer	2	13.1
Monroe	6	17.3
Montgomery	9	32.1
Morgan	7	21.0
Moultrie	0	0.0
Ogle	7	13.9
Peoria	26	14.6
Perry	4	19.4
Piatt	2	12.2
Pike	1	6.6
Pope	0	0.0

County	Number of Opioid Fatalities	Opioid Fatality Rate per 100,000 Capita
Pulaski	0	0.0
Putnam	0	0.0
Randolph	3	9.6
Richland	2	12.9
Rock Island	18	12.8
Saline	6	25.9
Sangamon	51	26.3
Schuyler	0	0.0
Scott	0	0.0
Shelby	2	9.4
St. Clair	69	26.7
Stark	0	0.0
Stephenson	5	11.4
Tazewell	23	17.6
Union	6	36.4
Vermilion	19	25.4
Wabash	1	8.9
Warren	0	0.0
Washington	3	21.8
Wayne	4	25.0
White	0	0.0
Whiteside	6	11.0
Will	138	20.0
Williamson	9	13.6
Winnebago	122	43.4
Woodford	5	13.1

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## Non-Fatal Opioid Overdoses

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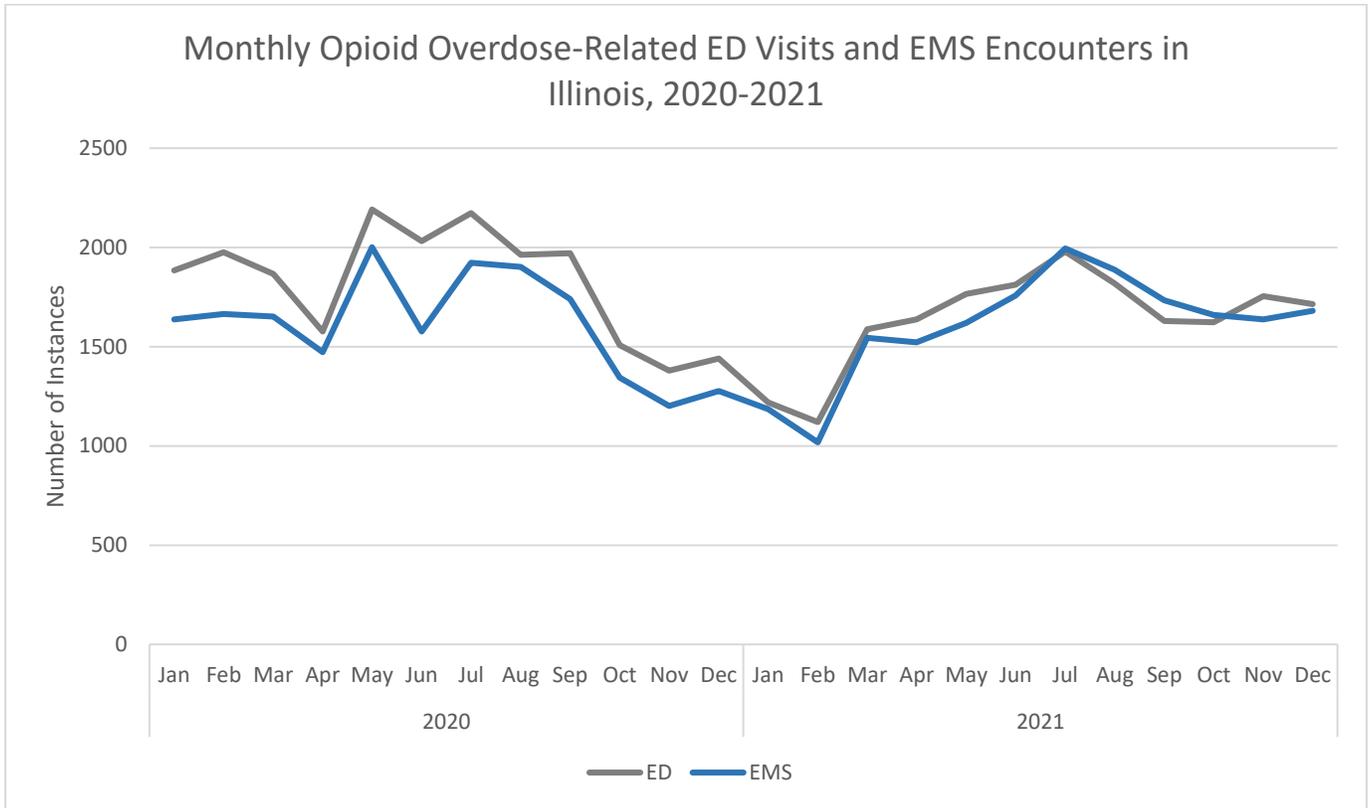


Figure 4. Monthly opioid overdose-related emergency department (ED) visits and emergency medical services (EMS) encounters in Illinois, 2020-2021. ED visits as reported by IDPH Syndromic Surveillance System; EMS encounters as reported by IDPH Prehospital Emergency Medical Services.

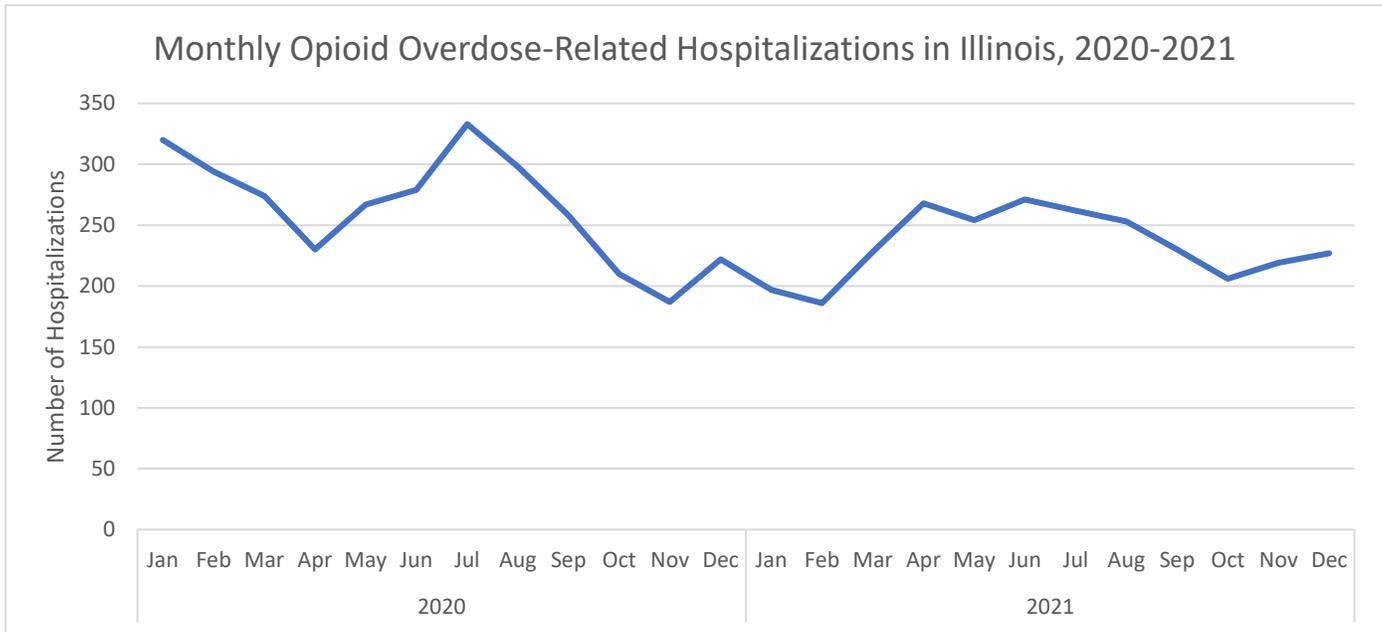


Figure 5. Monthly opioid overdose-related hospitalizations in Illinois in 2020-2021 as reported by IDPH Hospital Discharge Dataset.

Monthly opioid overdose-related hospitalization, ED visit, and EMS encounter trends are similar to the fatality trends. In the winter months of 2020 and into 2021, hospitalizations, ED visits, and EMS encounters decreased, but then increased again during the spring and summer months and remained steady throughout the remainder of 2021 (Figs. 4 and 5), which are similar to the fatal overdose trends.

Illicit substances are not regulated and pose significant risk of harm. If taking illicit substances, there are precautions that can be utilized. Consider testing the substance for fentanyl using fentanyl test strips. Carry naloxone and do not use substances alone. Also, be aware that more than one dose of naloxone may be required to reverse an overdose when a synthetic opioid is ingested.

For more information on opioids, visit <https://dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/opioids.html>. If you or a loved one is struggling with substance use, the Illinois Helpline is available at <https://helplineil.org/app/home>, call 833-234-6343, or text “HELP” to 833234.